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ABSTRACT

What can parents do to guide pupils to achieve well in reading? Parents may look at and discuss picture books with their preschool and kindergarten age children, without pressing them to read. School or public libraries are good sources of free reading materials. Parents must take ample time to read for themselves at home, thus modelling enjoyment of reading. Parents must also take adequate time to listen to the child read orally in the home setting. There are many reading games which may be played with children. Parents should be interested in their child's achievement in school. If a child is not doing well in reading, the following reasons may be in evidence: (1) the readers used in the classroom may be too easy or too complex; (2) the plan of reading instruction may not harmonize with the child's abilities; (3) poor teaching may be in evidence; and (4) there may be too much or too little emphasis on phonetic analysis, on identifying syllables within new words, on the use of context clues in identifying unknown words, or on the use of configuration clues. Certain behaviors may be exhibited by pupils with learning disability characteristics. Parents of children with such problems should show interest in their child's reading, and encourage and support the child in reading. (SR)

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HELPING YOUR CHILD IN READING

There are university professors as well as supervisors, principals, and teachers who feel and believe that only classroom teachers should teach reading to pupils. Reasons given to support this point of view include the following:

1. Teachers have been trained and certified to teach pupils. Parents and other lay people are not licensed and certified in teaching reading.

2. Parents and guardians make too many errors and use outdated methods in teaching reading.

3. Proper materials are lacking in the home setting to assist in the teaching of reading.

4. Parents become emotional and may reprimand pupils who do not read up to expectations of the former within the home arena.

There is much, of course, that parents and guardians may do to help their children achieve well in the area of reading.

THE PUPIL, PARENTS, AND READING

What can parents do to guide pupils to achieve well in reading? Let's notice selected methods which may be utilized to help preschoolers and kindergarten pupils.

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As soon as these youngsters have adequate interest, the parent or parents may look at pictures in library books with the involved children. Related ideas in these library books may also be read to preschool and kindergarten pupils. If the young child has questions and comments to offer pertaining to the illustrations and/or ideas read, this should be encouraged. Interest and curiosity on the part of pupils toward library books should be encouraged. At a young age, pupils must learn to feel that reading is an enjoyable and beneficial activity. Too frequently, pupils and adults find reading difficult and not profitable. Pupils who enjoy reading as an activity will read. This should be true if pupils are slow learners, average achievers, or talented readers. Library books are written on different achievement levels. Thus, reading materials exist which can be beneficial to individuals no matter what their present level of achievement is. Library books developed for preschool and kindergarten pupils should contain many large, appealing illustrations. Pupils, of course, learn much from pictures contained in library books and other reading materials. Once pupils understand important ideas in picture form, the act of reading then becomes less complex. If pupils struggle over ideas being read as well as identifying new words, the act of reading may be overwhelming for many pupils. However, if pupils understand background or basic ideas pertaining to what will be read, it becomes easier to recognize and pronounce new words in print. The preschool and kindergarten level is a good time for

young children to obtain background ideas pertaining to what they will be reading at a later time. Parents and guardians in the home setting are in an excellent position to help their children acquire ideas, and content in general.

Kindergarten pupils may reveal much curiosity when they point to new words and want parents to give their pronunciations. This is a healthy sign that pupils are interested in books and are beginning to show an interest in the act of reading. Parents, however, should definitely not force these youngsters in learning to read. Forcing pupils to learn to read when they are not ready to develop this skill can make for feelings of dislike toward reading. Thus, negative attitudes may be developed toward re ing as the first of the 3 R's. Learners above the kindergart level should also have new words pronounced to them by parents as the need arises in ongoing reading activities.

It is sometimes felt that much money is needed to have reading materials available for pupils in the home setting. This certainly need not be the case. Children can bring selected library books from the school library to the home setting free. If pupils do not avail themselves of these opportunities, the parent should talk to the involved teacher pertaining to possible reading materials that can be checked out free for use in the home. The library books checked out from the school library should be interesting, challenging, and stimulating to pupils. Pupils who select their own library books from school generally choose those which are

understandable and have appeal. This is the way it should be. If a child selects library books on one topic only, such as farm animals, parents may read in an interesting manner and discuss the related contents to these pupils of library books containing a variety of topics. Other possibilities for checking out library books free include the local city's public or private library. Librarians in public and private libraries can be very helpful in choosing suitable library books for pupils. In society, many parents have adequate income to buy enrichment library books, magazines, and weekly newspapers, written especially for children. It is excellent for pupils to own their very own books and other reading materials. The child's teacher and/or school librarian may be consulted on needed reading materials for pupils.

Parents and guardians in the home setting must take ample time to read to themselves. Thus, pupils can notice models in that parents love and enjoy reading. Pupils may not become proficient readers unless they can see parents read to themselves. The content parents read should also reveal a model to pupils. Reading of comic strips largely or only by parents, of course, is not adequate. Parents should read and be informed pertaining to local, state, national, and international news happenings. It is only wise to be a knowledgeable individual pertaining to what is relevant and significant. Certainly, news happenings do affect us directly as well as indirectly. Pupils may then notice that parents do read and read vital content. Parents always serve as

models to their children. Hardly, for example, can children be expected to refrain from the use of alcohol if parents are consumers. The child could, on his own, develop a value system which prohibits the use of alcohol even though a parent (or both parents) are either light or heavy consumers. This is not too likely, however. Again, it can not be emphasized strongly enough that if pupils are to enjoy reading experiences, parents also must show a positive attitude toward this valuable skill.

Parents must also take adequate time to listen to the child read orally in the home setting. There are many pupils who like to read orally and thus reveal to parents how well they are reading. Situations such as these give parents opportunities to notice pupil achievement in reading. Help can be given to pupils who cannot identify specific words. The content of the completed oral reading activity may be discussed involving parents and the child. One word of caution to parents--do not show negative feelings toward the pupil's present reading level. Rather, praise the child when he/she is improving in reading skills. Scolding and reprimanding pupils in their present achievement level can only make for situations where the young reader learns to dislike reading. Encourage the child to read by having interesting, quality reading materials in the home. You, the parents, as was stated previously, must set a good model for children by also reading to yourselves.

There are many reading games which may be played with children. Elementary age pupils generally like to play games. Thus, for example, four, five, and six year olds may like to locate items in the home which start with the same beginning sound as in the word "baby." These children with parental involvement may find a "bat," "bird" (in a cage), "ball," and "bottle" in one or several rooms. Each of these objects with their names starts with the same beginning sound. Four, five, and six year olds enjoy listening to poems containing rhyming words. They also like to give words which rhyme with a word presented by the parent. For example, if a parent asks for words which rhyme with "bat," young learners can respond with "cat," "hat," "mat," and others. Games should provide enjoyable experiences for pupils. Intermediate and upper grade pupils like to work crossword puzzles. These crossword puzzles may guide pupils in vocabulary development as well as in learning to read selected new words. Parents and the involved pupils cooperatively can work to complete crossword puzzles. There are weekly newspapers and magazines written for pupils on a graded basis which contain crossword puzzles. Parents should ask the pupil's teacher about the names and addresses of these newspapers and magazines written for pupils on different grade levels.

Parents, of course, should take much interest in their child's achievement in school, kindergarten through grade twelve. If a

pupil is not doing well in the curriculum area of reading, parents should have a conference with the teacher. It is important for the teacher and the parent to respect each other in the conference setting. The parent or parents in the conference may well be the necessary ingredient in working toward an improved reading curriculum for the pupil. If a child is not doing well in reading, the following reasons may be in evidence:

1. The readers used the classroom are either too easy for the child and boredom in reading is an end result, or the reader is too complex and learners cannot be successful on that level of achievement. Fourth grade readers utilized on the fourth grade level may meet the needs of very few pupils in a classroom. For selected pupils the content of the reader will be to easy; for others the reader has content which is excessively complex. The parent's role and responsibility is to confer with the teacher in choosing reading materials which are beneficial for a particular child. Too frequently, in a classroom, all pupils are studying the same story at the same time from a basal reader. This is not right and certainly does not harmonize with the diverse reading levels of a given set of pupils in the classroom setting.

2. The plan of reading instruction used in teaching pupils does not harmonize with the child's abilities. Parents need to have much knowledge pertaining to each plan of reading instruction. Parents may say they are not professional educators and need not have information pertaining to different methods of teaching reading. However, if parents do not discuss diverse plans of reading

instruction with the teacher of their children, improvement in the child's ability to read may not occur. Which are selected methods of teaching which may benefit specific pupils?

(a) individualized reading. In this plan of reading instruction, the pupils select a library book to read. If the child is not able to select a book to read, the teacher should assist the pupil in this endeavor. Generally, the pupil will select a library book which he/she can benefit from. After the child has completed reading the chosen book, a conference is held with the teacher to notice how well the contents have been comprehended. The child can also read a selection in the library book orally to the teacher. The teacher can then notice comprehension and ability to recognize and pronounce words correctly on the part of each pupil. Individualized reading, as the name indicates, is a method of teaching reading to help each pupil achieve as well as possible. This plan of reading instruction may be utilized in place of or to supplement basal readers. Individualized reading definitely does not emphasize pupils goofing off in learning. It is not a watered down method of teaching reading. In a good program of individualized reading, each pupil is reading from a different library book than others in the classroom. Ideally, each one is doing as much reading as possible and reading from books which are understandable and interesting.

(b) programmed reading. Programmed instruction is a unique method of learning to read. Pupils progress in very small

steps in this method of teaching reading. Thus, for example, a pupil reads a sentence or two and views a related picture. The pupil then answers a question over what has been read. The question usually requires a very short answer. The pupil may then check his/her answer immediately with that given by the writer of the program. If the child was right with his/her answer, feelings of being rewarded are generally felt. The pupil is ready for the next item following the same small steps in learning--read, view a picture, give a short answer to a question, and then check the answer given. If a pupil gives an incorrect answer, he/she now knows the correct answer after checking and is also ready for the next item in learning.

(c) the experience chart. Experience charts generally are utilized in teaching kindergarten and first grade pupils prior to being able to read on their own. In developing an experience chart, pupils first must have an interesting experience, such as experiencing a field trip, film, filmstrip, slides, and/or a discussion. Next, pupils orally present content over what has been experienced. The teacher writes these ideas in neat, manuscript letters on the chalkboard as they are given by learners. Pupils may then read the content as the teacher points to each word. The words become increasingly familiar to pupils since they had realistic, related experiences prior to reading the content. Once pupils can do their own writing, they may write their own experience charts.

(d) other plans in the teaching of reading. Space does not permit to describe other plans of reading instruction to help each pupil learn to read as well as possible. These plans, if the parent is interested, may be discussed with the teacher--Individually Prescribed Instruction, Individually Guided Education, the Initial Teaching Alphabet (for primary grade pupils), the Diacritical Marking System, SRA Reading Laboratory, and color coding in reading instruction.

If a child is not progressing satisfactorily in reading, according to the thinking of parents, a conference should be held with the regular teacher and/or the remedial reading teacher.

3. Poor teaching is in evidence in the reading curriculum. The teacher is trying to cover too many pages in a basal reader in different class sessions rather than teaching individual pupils in learning to read. There is a big difference between the teacher keeping all pupils in a classroom together on the same page at the same time in utilizing a basal reader as compared to actually teaching each child the skills of reading.

4. Too much or too little phonetic analysis is emphasized in reading. The concept "phonetic analysis" is easy to understand. It merely has to do with a pupil learning to sound out individual letters or vital parts within a word. Teachers may call this process--associating sounds with symbols or letters. For example, in the word "can," each letter makes a different sound. The word "one" is a commonly used word and contains irregularities when

relating individual sounds to single letters. There are many words that contain inconsistencies when sounding out individual letters. Sometimes two or more letters make a sound--chair, there, and phone. There are silent letters within a word--knife, knee, bake, and hollow. There are many ways to write a long "i" sound--my, pie, sigh, kite, and right. It is quite obvious, from these examples, that a teacher can emphasize too much instruction in phonetic analysis. Many words are not that consistent between letters and their related sounds to emphasize phonetic analysis as a sole method of identifying words. However, there are also many, many cases where instruction in phonetic analysis is beneficial. Even the word "one" has as "n" sound, such as in can, man, fan, ban, Dan, Nan, Jan, pan, ran, tan, and van. Thus, the teacher needs to help pupils learn to relate sounds to symbols or letters in reading. A pupil who is not progressing well in reading may need help in sounding out letters within a word. It must be remembered that we read whole words and do not distort sounds within a word, such as distorting the pronunciation of the word "pail" into "puh" "ā" "ul." Pupils can become slow readers of content if too much attention is paid to specific sounds that individual letters make within a word. If a pupil cannot hear sounds within a word in order to be able to identify that unknown word, other methods need to be taught and utilized for word recognition purposes.

5. Too much or too little attention is given in identifying syllables within a word to assist in identifying new words. If

a pupil cannot hear syllables in words, other methods of teaching reading will need to be utilized. Most pupils, however, do find it helpful to be able to identify new words by recognizing inherent syllables. A pupil, for example, may feel the following to be a new unknown word: unimportant. However, he/she recognizes an important part of that word which is "important." The pupil has experienced the prefix "un" in other words, such as unknown and undo. Thus, "unimportant" in reality is basically not a new word to the reader, but is made up of syllables from two previously learned words. Other examples in which dividing a word into syllables can assist a pupil in identifying an otherwise unknown word:

(a) transport -- trans/port

(b) walking -- walk/ing

(c) regardless -- re/gard/less

(d) pencil -- pen/cil

A pupil then can become a more proficient reader when being able to divide words into syllables. This skill is necessary only to the degree that it helps individual pupils become better readers. There are teachers who day after day have pupils work workbook and/or mimeographic sheets containing work in dividing words into syllables (and/or emphasize work in phonetic analysis also) long after pupils have become skillful in the area of reading. Learning activities in syllabication and phonetic analysis should assist pupils to enjoy and like reading. Pupil's interest

in reading should not be hindered with experiences and activities emphasizing syllabication and phonetic analysis.

6. Too much or too little emphasis is being placed upon the use of context clues in identifying unknown words. The use of context clues in reading merely means that if a pupil does not know a word in reading, he/she will choose a word that makes sense in the sentence. For example, supposing a child is reading the following and does not identify the last word: I see a _____. There are many words that would fit in meaningfully with the first three words in the sentence. Thus, a child may respond with "car," "girl," "boy," "clown," and "man." The pupil could also read in context erroneously the following words: oar, angel, owl, oriole, ark, and egg. However, these words do not fit into the context of the rest of the sentence properly. Sometimes a pupil will read erroneously a ridiculous word into a sentence: He ran over the where. The underlined word "where" definitely does not make sense in the sentence. The teacher must help pupils choose words that make sense within the sentence. Identifying unknown words in context, of course, can be overdone. A pupil, for example, may then guess new words, wrongly, which make sense in a sentence and yet are not the correct words. Consider again the following sentence in print: I see a b_____. There are many objects and items which one can see and what is named may well make sense within a sentence. If the pupil knows the individual sound that the letter "b" makes which starts the new word, a very vital

clue is then given as to the new unknown word. Thus, words such as "car," "girl," and "clown" are eliminated. These words do not start with the sound made by the letter "b". The words "baby," "bat," "ball," and "boat" start with the "b" sound. In readers written for primary grade pupils, there are ample pictures generally on each of the inherent pages. Thus, by looking at the picture of the page being read, the pupil may notice a picture of a boy. "Boy" is the correct word to be read in the sentence: I see a _____. Thus, pictures may also give clues as to the proper identification of unknown words.

7. Too little or too much emphasis is being placed upon the use of configuration clues in reading. Configuration clues merely pertain to pupils identifying words through noticing their shape or form. Thus, pupils can learn to notice how words differ from each other in terms of shape or form. Each of the following words, for example, have gross differences in configuration -- boy, girl, night, tall, and football. Notice how the initial consonant in the word "boy" differs from the first letter in the word "girl." The ending letters in the word "boy" and "girl" also differ much from each other in appearance. Some words are longer and others are shorter in length. Selected words have taller letters than do other words. Thus, it is vital for pupils to learn to identify words in terms of configuration in addition to phonetic analysis and syllabication. However, ultimately, good readers recognize words instantly by looking at words and being able to pronounce them readily.

You, the parent, have an important responsibility in improving the reading curriculum for your child. If a pupil is not learning to recognize new words at a reasonable level of achievement, consult the teacher to discuss methods utilized in helping pupils acquire proficiency in reading. Pupils need adequate learnings in phonetic analysis, syllabication, context clues, picture clues, and configuration clues to become good readers. There are pupils who may come in the category of having a learning disability (or disabilities). Learning disability (LD) specialists in school may need to be consulted, if with good teaching, a pupil does not achieve at a realistic level in reading. Among others, the following behaviors may be exhibited by pupils with LD characteristics:

1. reading words from a right to left direction or mixing words within a sentence (e.g. the word "was" read as "saw," the sentence "The cat saw the dog" read as "The dog saw the cat"). Rather consistently pupils read in the previously described manner and not on a single occasion only. Selected beginners may make reversals and outgrow these tendencies in a rich learning environment. Pupils definitely must not be scolded in reading achievement for that which cannot be learned at a given stage of development.

2. having a very short attention span. Reading materials must be on the interest and understanding level of pupils. Even then selected learners have fleeting attention spans. They cannot

concentrate long enough on individual words in order to learn to read. There are pupils who may need specific methods and materials in learning to read. A reputable LD teacher may be able to give specific help in these cases. The writer, in most cases, is opposed to medical prescriptions such as rittalin to assist "hyperactive" children develop a longer attention span. Too frequently, regular and learning disability (LD) teachers desire pupils to be extremely quiet and passive in the classroom. Pupils generally are active, healthy individuals and should be involved in learning activities and experiences which are beneficial in becoming better readers. Activities and experiences need to be chosen which increase and lengthen pupils' attention spans.

3. not remembering specific words in reading and spelling after ample exposure to these learnings. A pupil, for example, in a reputable program of reading instruction continually may not be able to remember specific words from diverse lessons in reading instruction. There are recommended methods to utilize in teaching pupils who cannot recall vital words in reading content.

Parents of children with learning disabilities in reading should consult a remedial reading teacher or LD specialist in the public school on ways to help pupils with unusual problems in learning to read. The following are selected recommendations for parents to follow with children having LD problems:

(a) Show interest in your child's reading. Do not expect a level of achievement which is not possible or not realistic for

the pupil. Discuss with pupils what has been read in an understandable manner. Parents who scold pupils for not doing as well as desired in reading aid the latter in learning to dislike the act of reading.

(b) Encourage and support your child in reading. LD children, in particular, need enouragement to keep trying and achieving in reading. They generally experience much frustration and unhappiness in reading. A person who perceives a word or words printed from right to left instead of left to right, of course, may not understand what is being read. The major purpose of reading content is to comprehend facts, concepts, and generalizations. Pupils with problems in the area of learning disabilities need praise when improvement in reading is in the offing.

IN SUMMARY

There are diverse plans of instruction to assist each pupil to develop as well as possible in reading. Teachers and parents need to work together to guide a learner to experience continuous progress in reading. Parents and the teacher need to evaluate if the pupil is

1. benefitting optimally from the present program of reading instruction. If the child is not experiencing success in reading, causes need to be determined as to why this is happening. An improved program of reading instruction should follow the conference.

2. interested in reading. If a lack of interest is in evidence, reading materials can be found which generally are of

interest to an individual child.

3. perceiving purpose or reasons for learning to read. Both the teacher and the parent need to guide, not dictate, pupils to see values in becoming a good reader.